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ABSTRACT

A philosophical orientation to teacher education would be a critical orientation, laying stress on the clarification of terminology, on the understanding of the logic of subject matter, and on a consideration of "what the known demands," or action deemed necessary from content knowledge. Fragmentation would be overcome, and a synthesis would be effected, not only throughout the curriculum, but in the organization of the school and its relation to the community. There would be a focus on the normative dimension of education: on the differences between "schooling" and "education"; on aims and purposes, values, and value conflicts; and on agreed upon moral principles and questions having to do with decision making and choice. (JD)

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ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH
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What the Known Demands:
A Philosophical Orientation to Teacher Education

by

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In Democracy and Education, John Dewey said:

> Philosophy is thinking what the known demands of us--what responsive attitude it exacts. It is an idea of what is possible, not a record of accomplished fact. Hence it is hypothetical, like all thinking. It presents an assignment of something to be done--something to be tried. Its value lies not in its furnishing solutions (which can be achieved only in action) but in defining difficulties and suggesting methods for dealing with them. Philosophy might almost be described as thinking which has become conscious of itself--which has generalized its place, function, and value in experience. (1)

I quote that at length because I want to distinguish philosophy from what is often conceived as a purely abstract, analytic

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exercise of little consequence for lived classroom life. I want to distinguish it as well from the building of overarching systems of thought, in which all questions are answered, all uncertainties resolved. In fact, the posing of questions is at the heart of the "doing" of philosophy--clarifying questions, synthesizing questions, normative questions. To enable teachers-to-be to ask them is to enable them to think about what they are doing, to think about their own thinking.[2] Reflective persons, persons who are "wide-awake" are far less likely to become mere functionaries or technicians, certainly less likely than those who are literally "thoughtless"[3] and out of touch with themselves.

The project of teaching at times like these requires the kind of thoughtfulness that moves people to confront the fundamental questions. The purposes of public education can no longer be taken for granted, nor can its justifications. The institutions of democracy can no longer be taken for granted; nor can regard for the rights of persons, for the benefits to which they are entitled, for the liberties that are their due. Teachers cannot be mere technicians under such conditions. They must be educated to enter into the discussion of what the schools are for. They must be given the resources they require to articulate and to incarnate the shared norms that ostensibly sustain our society: justice, equality, freedom, concern, mutuality, rationality, decency. Of course they must be held accountable for what they do in classrooms; but they are also responsible (as we

who are their teachers are responsible) for remaking our common future, for acting upon perceived possibility.

Philosophy is not to be considered as a potential source of high-level directives for the guidance of practice. It is not a body of privileged knowledge, nor a creed, nor a special mode of insight or expertise. It needs to be done in the world, and most particularly in the world of colleges and schools, done from the vantage point of those engaged or about to be engaged in practice, those purposefully involved in accomplishing or achieving something they consider to be worthwhile. To do philosophy in this fashion is to reflect upon the knowledge gathered in the several fields of inquiry, to examine underlying assumptions, to disclose hidden major premises. It is, for example, to consider the ways in which understanding of classroom events, human relationships, and developmental stages might inform the practical judgments made in classrooms in a pluralist society at this troubled moment of time. It is to ask what the concept 'teacher education' actually signifies, what 'behavior' means--and 'action' and 'prediction' and 'cognition' and 'self'.

Clarity is important, as logic is important and the construction of sound rational arguments. To attend to such matters, to <u>care</u> about them is to understand what Israel Scheffler calls the "special connection" between teaching and "rational explanation and critical dialogue: with the enterprise of giving honest reasons and welcoming radical questions."[4] There may indeed be such a phenomenon as "rational passion,"[5] a passion linked to the solicitude, the capacity to attend that

Dewey described as "mindfulness."[6] It is the ability to think about our own thinking that gives rise to such attentiveness, the willingness to ponder "what the known demands."

The critical and analytic questions are essential, I am suggesting; but there is more. Situations must be created that move students to confront the splits, the contradictions, the dissonances that mark the educational domain today. There are the familiar tensions between the "affective" and the "cognitive," the arts and the sciences, the qualitative and the quantitative. There are the competing demands of equality and the concern for excellence, justice and self-determination, compassion and autonomy. There are the persisting differences between schooling and education, training and teaching. There is the troubling separation between the "is" and the "should," fact and value, that which exists and that which ought to be. To devise questions with respect to such oppositions is to embark on a search for various modes of synthesis: seeing things in dialectical or transactional relationships; creating integrating or unifying perspectives that bring "the severed parts together"[7]; patterning areas of the field of experience, effecting connections, becoming "ourselves that network of relationships"[8] that brings order and meaning into the world. Those who are provoked to question in this way, to pursue meaning in this way must recognize that perfect synthesis is impossible, that there are no total resolutions of conflict within reach. There is always a vital inconclusiveness in philosophy. An ongoing conversation is presumed, an ongoing dialogue. It is the sense of the ongoing and

the sense of dialogue that enhance consciousness of what it is to be in the world along with others, to have a plan of action, to try to achieve, to mend.

And this summons up what may be the fundamental philosophical questions: those having to do with values or with conceptions of the desirable, with principles and moral choices, with imagined possibility. To speak of a value consciousness is to have in mind an awareness of lack, of insufficiency; and it is likely that a perception of insufficiency or incompleteness is what moves persons to go in quest of something better, to think of what ought to be. There are, especially for teachers, such matters as community norms and reference points; there are the frequent contests between the public's notion of what is good and right and what the professional has defined. There is the need for a critical address to unexamined rules and prescriptions, as there is the need to inquire into what it signifies to be principled and at once immersed in situations, cognizant of consequences, sensitive to demands. Again, if students are to be motivated to pose the questions, they must feel located somehow; they must be able to articulate their own perspectives and see the possibility of others; they must wonder and probe and experience perplexity. And, from their own places, their own vantage points, they must be brought to understand what is involved in authentic choosing, how values are created in an uncertain world.

Whatever their levels of development, they must see themselves as human, participating in the human condition and engaging

with others who are equally human, trying to let those others learn. But there is the matter of what it is to be human and, indeed, if "human nature" can ever be defined. More important than definition, in fact, is the kind of practice thought warranted by a particular view of human being. Is the primary commitment to cognitive development, personal development, vocational development? What assumptions regarding human action and human being sustain each choice? Are certain types of "excellence" to be preferred, or is it possible to conceive multiple "excellences"? How, then, are we to define 'excellence'? How do our preconceptions about what it is to be fully human affect our judgments of people in the classroom? None of these questions are empirically answerable. All of them demand some analysis of terms, some criticism of the taken for granted, some clarification of what is to be preferred. I am arguing that students be released to frame them, that they be provoked to think of the ways in which they choose themselves and live with others in the world.

To reflect upon the person and his/her growth is inevitably to think about cognition; and no questions are more focal in education than those having to do with epistemology or the problem of knowledge. What we understand about knowing how and knowing that, about believing, reasoning, judging, and imagining has everything to do with what we come to understand about teaching and learning and the making of curriculum. Indeed, to clarify and interrelate our conceptions of sense-making is to engage in the most challenging, most relevant form of inquiry. Knowing, after all, presupposes involvement with the human

and physical world around. It is a process requiring certain kinds of intentional action; and what is called knowledge is a product or function of the initiatives taken, the actions performed.

Theories of knowledge, then, and of knowing come together in a concern for human initiatives and human action. It is rare today to find anyone positing a purely passive, contemplative knower; it is rare to find anyone positing rationality as a mode of apprehending predefined truths. For all the differences in the ways the appropriate cognitive actions are conceived, there is always an emphasis on the perspectives they make possible and on the need to <u>care</u> about what is being disclosed. It might be said that knowing itself, whether understood as empirical in character, insightful, or in some manner immediate or intuitive, is a particular way of relating to things from a particular location in space and time and in accord with particular protocols. Again, however, the questions have to be asked; students have to be moved to reflect back upon themselves, if the problems are to come clear.

Teachers-to-be, in such a case, may be brought to picture the living being, with his/her own store of experience, building up a meaningful world from things inherited and things learned. In the background, always, there is the common-sense knowledge of everyday life in which everyone's learning and inquiry begin. And that is where the process of conceptualization originates, the activity of organizing and structuring sensory experience by means of certain patterns or <u>schemata</u> or abstract ideas. They may be called constructs,

models, perspectives; whatever they are called, they enable persons to impose provisional orders on what would otherwise remain a chaos, a "booming, buzzing confusion." To communicate this; to talk in terms of concepts like 'childhood,' 'culture', 'justice', 'education','art'; to indicate the ways in which they map and demarcate the lived world, the ways in which they enable individuals to name things and to see: all this is to offer to teachers-to-be a vision of knowing as participant, as meaning-endowing. It is to suggest to them the ways in which we humanize and interpret an otherwise blank world. And it is, at once, to suggest the ways there are of making connections in experience, so that meanings develop and new perspectives, as we know more, as we grow.

Clearly, the questions proliferate the more teaching is studied, the more students discover what is involved in enabling others to learn how to learn. There are such issues as proficiency and precision;[9] there are the always open problems relating to definition and evidence. There are such matters as the relation between the subjective and the objective, the role of perceptual awareness and imagination, the part played by emotion in disclosing what is at hand. Much inquiry in this domain concerns the kinds of curricula that can be justified by specific theories of knowledge, as it concerns the logic of their organization, the explanatory principles, the symbol systems involved, and the relation of all these to the social order and to the world as actually lived.

Teachers-to-be have also to confront the problems having

to do with conditioning and indoctrination. Choices have to be continually made as to whether and to what degree students are to be treated as autonomous inquirers who are self-determining or as people who must be shaped and molded, extrinsically motivated, to the end of performing effectively or demonstrating predefined competencies and skills. Should they be indoctrinated with democratic values, or should they be placed in a position to achieve them as a community, if not by their individual selves? Should achievement be given priority, or should growth? How can teachers and teachers-to-be be provided with the kinds of perspective on what is now called "technocratic rationality"[10] that will permit them to be self-aware and critical and, at once, committed to teaching the young what they need to know? The notion of thoughtfulness and its significance returns, along with Hannah Arendt's view that "if it should turn out to be true that knowledge (in the modern sense of know-how) and thought have parted company for good, then we would indeed become the helpless slaves, not so much of our machines as of our know-how, thoughtless creatures at the mercy of every gadget which is technically possible, no matter how murderous it is."[11]

Arendt was asking, too, that we "do" philosophy, at least if we are willing to think about what we are doing. There are so many perspectives to offer, so many languages, so many possibilities to pursue; and, more often than not, thinking "what the known demands" opens windows on domains the specialties exclude. We need only

consider the arts for a moment--literature, music, dance, theatre, painting--and the new visions they may reveal on the taken-for-granted and the everyday. The cultivation of aesthetic literacy is what makes an informed awareness possible, an awareness of potential significance for every teacher-to-be. It is what allows persons to be present to a T.S. Eliot poem, a Monet painting, a Mozart sonata; it is what empowers them to bring such works alive in their experience and to find themselves to some degree transformed. This takes philosophical sensitivity as well, as it takes interest and wonder and concern. Surely it is important to acquaint students with a full range of cognitive and affective and perceptual possibilities, so that they can attend more carefully, take more into account as they pursue their meanings and find their way through the world.

We hear of burn-out; we hear of boredom; we hear of malaise and passivity. People who feel numbed and deadened are scarcely likely to commit themselves; nor are they likely to develop an ethical or a moral concern. This concern may be at the heart of a philosophical interest in teaching and learning; indeed, it may be where the questions culminate, if they are authentically posed. Moral choosing, of course, involves the exercise of will by a person who is present to a situation, conscious of what he/she is doing, aware of some purpose to be achieved. Voluntary, uncoerced, it is an action freely undertaken; and this means that it leads towards a future, towards some envisaged possibility. Whether the agent is a Hamlet concerned to "set things right" in a corrupt society, or a Nora

desperately wanting to liberate herself, or an "invisible man" creating himself as "visible" at last, the one making the choice is responding, more often than not, to a summons. Values or norms latent in his/her experience are becoming manifest in response to some situational demand. They would neither become manifest nor serve as a summons if the person or persons involved could not posit some normative community existing within reach. This means a fabric of shared agreements achieved by people who are together in a we-relation, who choose to be together in accord with certain notions of the good and right. How can teacher educators ignore the importance of comprehending and instituting this kind of community? How can schools be anything but training stations if those within them do not think about living together in reciprocity and with a sense of acknowledged standards and norms?

To "do" philosophy is to inquire into ways of grounding such norms, for all the tensions of a pluralist society. It is to consider such matters as obligation and loyalty and commitment, to ponder modes of justifying what is conceived to be good and right. As Dewey said, philosophy's value "lies not in its furnishing solutions (which can be achieved only in action) but in defining difficulties and suggesting methods for dealing with them." The difficulties are multiple today; but teacher educators are all too prone to translate them into technical problems to be solved by more and more precise applications of technique. I am suggesting that the crucial

problems facing us have to do with the way we are together, the way we speak to one another, the way we bring value into an indifferent world. We know more and more; but we think less and less. We have power beyond imagining; but we feel ourselves to be personally powerless. To "do" philosophy is embark on new beginnings in a new and painful wide-awakeness. It is to confront the unanswerable and to reach beyond. It is to come alive to ourselves, to wonder, to reflect, to move towards possibility. What, after all, does the known demand?

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